BHIMA SLAYS THE DEMON BAKASURA

from the *Maha-bharata*

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CAST: Narrator, Bhima, Arjuna, Yudhishthira, Sahadeva, Nakula, Mother Kunti, Brahmana, Bakasura.

Narrator: Once there lived a great king in the land of Bharata-varsha, known today as India. He was a pure devotee of Lord Krishna named Maharaja Yudhishthira. He also had four younger brothers: Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva. Together they were known as the great Pandavas. They were also said to be born of a divine birth by their mother, Queen Kunti. They lived peacefully executing their duties, while their envious cousins headed by Duryodhana always plotted against them by trying to unscrupulously take away their rightful kingdom. Once their cousin Duryodhana had arranged for a house of shellac to be made for them, and he gave them the house with the intention of burning them all to death, so that he could get their kingdom. But by the grace of the Lord, they escaped. They experienced many hardships, but they always kept Krishna in the center. Here we take you to one adventure they went through, after having escaped the fire of death.

SCENE ONE

The Forest

Bhima: Come along, let's keep moving.

Sahadeva: My dear Bhima, we are not as strong as you. Therefore we need to rest here for a while.

Arjuna: Besides, why are you in so much of a hurry? Where do you want to go? Just be glad we escaped from the house of fire.

Bhima: Well, that's just it, my brother. Why should we be glad that we escaped from death? Why should we have had to go through this anyway, having well known that it was Duryodhana and his evil friends who tried to kill us, just like he has done in the past? We should have killed him a long time ago! Right now I am eager to smash him to bits with my club!

Yudhishthira: My dear Bhima, please calm down! We shall settle everything in due course of time.

Bhima: In due course of time... in due course of time... And when will that be?

When we are too old to do anything! No, I can't wait or tolerate this inconvenience caused to all of you. Look at our poor mother do you think this is a fit way to treat her? No, I am not going to have it. What about when he tried to poison my food? You just want me to tolerate it! I will go and kill him as well as his evil-minded friends!

Kunti: My dear Bhima, please control your anger and listen to your brother. We shall speak with Lord Krishna and your grandfather Bhishma. Surely, they will help us out. Let us rest here for a while and then go to some nearby village for food and shelter. There we shall discuss what to do next.

Nakula: Look, there's a lake! Let's get some water to drink.

Sahadeva: Good, I'm really thirsty. It's such a hot day. **(they all drink water. In comes a Brahmana)**

Kunti: Excuse me sir, can you tell me where the nearest town is? We need to go there for some food and shelter for a few days before we continue on our journey.

Brahmana: Well, just nearby is a town called Ekachakra where I live. You can all come there. In fact, if you like you can all be my guests for few days. We are always glad to have guests in our house.

Kunti: Thank you very much. That's very kind of you.

SCENE TWO

The Pandavas in the house of the Brahmana

Kunti: No one suspects who we are. So, we should keep our identity a secret. Since we are staying at this nice *brahmana's* house, we can't expect him to feed us all, so I want you to go out and collect alms. Then we shall divide it amongst ourselves. Half will go to Bhima and the other half the rest of us shall share. Be careful now! **(Kunti does some cleaning. Brahmana comes in crying)**

Brahmana: O my Lord, what am I to do now? How has such a terrible calamity come upon me? O my Lord Krishna, please be merciful and help me out. Please let my son live, somehow or other! **(breaks down)**

Kunti: My dear *brahmana,* I am sorry but I couldn't help but overhear what you were saying. What seems to be the problem? Is your son sick? What kind of a danger is he in?

Brahmana: Oh, what's the use of telling you? You can't do anything about it!

Kunti: Well, at least tell me, so I can see if there is anything I can do.

Brahmana: No, no. There's absolutely nothing you can do. It's all beyond our control!

Kunti: My dear sir, you have so kindly let us stay in your house, and it bereaves me to see you lament in this way without at least trying to help you. Now please tell me what is causing you so much distress.

Brahmana: If you must know, not far from here is a man-eating *rakshasa* named Bakasura. He used to come and attack our village, killing many people some he would eat and some he would just kill unnecessarily. This went on for some time. The king was helpless, for the demon was extremely powerful. So the king decided to come to terms with the *rakshasa.* The king arranged that if he would stop attacking the town and killing so many people unnecessarily that he would arrange for lots of foodstuff to be brought to him in a cart. Being a man-eating *rakshasa,* he would also eat the person who took the food. So, it was decided by the citizens that each family would send one person from the house along with the food each month. So, tomorrow it is my turn to send someone, and I have to send my only son. **(breaks down. Kunti thinks)**

Kunti: Do not lament like this, for I can certainly help you out.

Brahmana: You can help me out? What can you do?

Kunti: Well, since I am the mother of five sons, I shall send one of my sons instead.

Brahmana: No, never! Out of the question! This is not your problem. Why should you send your son to get killed? You don't even belong in this village.

Kunti: I have already decided it shall be done. Besides, you have been so nice to us. I owe you this much.

Brahmana: What, by allowing one of your sons to be killed?

Kunti: Do not worry, he won't be killed. He is very strong. He shall defeat the demon. You should have faith in me. But you must tell no one.

Brahmana: Well, are you sure you want to do this?

Kunti: For certain, as soon as he comes back I shall inform him.

Brahmana: That's very kind of you.

Kunti: Think nothing of it. **(Brahmana goes off)**

Bhima: **(comes in and kicks a table)** This is crazy, I can't stand it any longer!

Kunti: My dear Bhima, please. This is not our house, we are only guests here. What's the matter? Why are you in a bad mood?

Bhima: I'll tell you why I am in a bad mood. Well, here I am, son of a king, the great Maharaja Pandu. I, who am the cousin of the all-powerful Krishna, the leader of the Yadu dynasty, am begging door-to-door and getting doors slammed in my face. O mother, really this is too much for me! Day by day I am getting thinner. Before long I won't be able to lift even a twig. Why can't we gather our allies, attack Hastinapura and get our rightful kingdom by force?

Kunti: Your brother Yudhishthira knows best how to act. You know he wants to avoid battle with your cousins. Anyway, I have some good news for you.

Bhima: What is that?

Kunti: Tomorrow the people of the town are cooking lots of foodstuffs to be taken to some *rakshasa.* All you have to do is take the food over there, eat it all and kill the demon.

Bhima: That sounds like a nice idea. At last I can satisfy my hunger! I would fight with anyone for nice foodstuffs! Is there going to be lots of *puris, subjis,* and *laddus*?

Kunti: Yes, of course, my son, they will have all this and lots more. But, be careful of the demon! They say he is very strong.

Bhima: Have no fear, mother. I will meditate on Lord Krishna and He will bring me out victorious. **(the other brothers walk in)**

Kunti: O my sons, you have arrived. Are you all well?

Yudhishthira: Yes, thank you, mother. Here are the foodstuffs. Hey Bhima, where did you get to? I didn't see you all day. How much food did you beg? What's the matter? Why are you looking so happy? Has something happened?

Kunti: Today, the *brahmana* who owns the place where we are staying was telling me of a *rakshasa* who lives near here and terrorizes the village. So, tomorrow the village people are cooking lots of foodstuffs for him.

They also have to send one citizen along with the food to get eaten by the demon. Unfortunately, this *brahmana* has to send his only son. So I told him I will send one of my sons Bhima will go instead, eat all the food and kill the *rakshasa.* That's why he is all excited.

Yudhishthira: O mother, what have you done? You have sent Bhima to his death! Relying on his strength, I was hoping to get our kingdom back! Alas, we will not see you, Bhima, anymore! You who are more dear to me than my own life! O Bhima! Mother, I can't understand why you have done this!

Kunti: Yudhishthira, I know the strength of my own son better than anyone. I know he will kill the *rakshasa* and come out victorious. You need not fear anything. Did he not slay the powerful demon Hidimba?

Yudhishthira: It shall be as you say, mother.

Arjuna: Anyway, if anything comes in the way of our Bhima and some foodstuffs, I don't think they have much of a chance to live. Ha ha!

All: (laughter)

SCENE THREE

The Forest

(Enter Bhima, looks around)

Bhima: I think that's all the foodstuffs there now, no sign of the demon. I must eat all the food before the demon comes, otherwise it will get all scattered during the fight. We don't want all this food to go to waste, now do we? Okay, I will go back behind here and eat everything before he comes. **(looks around)**

Rakshasa: That was a very good sleep! Now there's nothing like having something to eat! I hope all the food is behind here. The fools last time were late. Why, if they are late I am going to teach them a good lesson or two! **(opens curtain)** Ah ha... who is this? It looks like he's eaten up all my food. Well, he's going to pay the price with his dear life. Hey you, get up, get up, get up! You rascal, did you eat all of my food?

Bhima: Well, I just happened to bump into all of this and I thought it would be rather a waste to leave it, so I ate it. Is that alright with you?

Rakshasa: Take this! **(fight takes place Bhima still eats with one hand while holding back the furious demon with the other hand)**

SCENE FOUR

In the house of the Brahmana

Yudhishthira: Bhima, are you okay? Did everything go well?

Bhima: Yes, thank you, brother. **(to mother Kunti)** O mother, thank you for that fantastic feast, it was wonderful! Sorry, I didn't save any for you!

Kunti: It doesn't matter, my son. As long as you are happy, we are all satisfied.

Bhima: My dear *brahmana*, the *rakshasa* is now dead and the village people need not fear him any longer.

Brahmana: Who are you, who has the strength to kill such a powerful *rakshasa*?

Bhima: I performed some austerities for the pleasure of Lord Shiva, and he granted me the boon to kill the demon since he was the cause of so much trouble.

Brahmana: And if the king asks who killed him, what shall I say?

Bhima: All you have to say is the same thing, but instead of naming me, say that your own son was invested with the strength of Lord Shiva to kill him.

Kunti: Yes, that's a very good idea, now we must move on to our next destination.

Brahmana: No, no, no, you cannot go now! Please stay for a few more days!

Yudhishthira: No, we must move on now, we only planned to stay here for a little while.

Brahmana: But you saved the whole village – everyone should know!

Kunti: No one should know. If you are at all grateful to us, then our request is that you keep this a secret and let us go quietly.

Brahmana: As you wish, but you are all welcome to return here.

Arjuna: Let's go to Maharaja Drupada's kingdom – I think they are having a marriage festival there!

Kunti: Let's go, then. **(the Pandavas exit)**

Brahmana: My dear Lord Krishna, thank You for allowing my son to live! Let my devotion to You increase day by day. O Lord Krishna, I pray that I may never forget You and Your devotees, for You are my Lord and my master. Come, son, let us cook a big feast for the Lord.

The End